

Chapter One

THE MICHIGAN ABOVE-GROUND SURVEY PROGRAM



Chelsea's Central Business District

INTRODUCTION

This manual provides standards and guidelines for conducting surveys of above-ground historic resources in Michigan that can be used by those planning and carrying out survey projects. The manual replaces the series of eight survey manuals most recently used by the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the SHPO's older *Surveying Michigan's Historic and Architectural Resources: A How-To-Do Guide*, published in 1980. The manual offers recommended approaches for identifying, documenting, and evaluating the significance of historic resources and for presenting the results of these projects in a format intended to be informative and useful to planners, public officials, and others who design projects that may have an impact on the historic environment and to property owners, neighborhood groups, teachers, historical and historic preservation organizations, the media, and the public at large. The manual also offers guidelines to producing survey products that are compatible with and contribute to the statewide inventory of historic properties maintained by the Michigan SHPO.

This manual is designed to provide guidance for all types of above-ground survey projects, including:

- Surveys intended to provide an informational database for the establishment of local historic districts under Michigan's local historic districts enabling act, Public Act 169 of 1970, as amended, or for other preservation planning purposes, including the preparation of nominations to the National Register of Historic Places;
- Surveys funded by the federal Historic Preservation Fund and administered by the State of Michigan; and
- Surveys required by the SHPO under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Users of this manual should also be familiar with National Register Bulletin 24, *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning*, available through the SHPO.

This manual does not provide instruction for archaeological surveys. For information about archaeological surveys, please contact the Office of the State Archaeologist.

WHAT IS A SURVEY?

A survey is a systematic search for properties that possess or appear to possess significance to national, state, or local history. Survey is the process of identifying and gathering data on properties that may be historic. It includes field survey, the physical search for and recordation of basic information about historic and potentially historic properties; background research to establish the historic context for the properties within the project area; and historical research on surveyed properties. It also includes evaluation, the process of determining whether identified properties meet defined criteria of historical, architectural, engineering, or cultural significance. The final products of a survey are an inventory of the surveyed properties that includes data and photographic or electronic images, maps showing the locations of the surveyed properties, and a report that summarizes the survey project, establishes the historic context for the project area and surveyed properties, and sets forth the results of the survey project, including the results

of the evaluation process.

There are several types of surveys. Most survey projects may be conducted at one of two levels. The "intensive" level survey yields sufficient historical data on specific surveyed properties to make informed evaluations of historic significance possible. The "reconnaissance" level survey provides basic information about the surveyed properties but not enough information to complete evaluations of historic significance. Reconnaissance level surveys should be viewed as only the first step — as a stop-gap measure until more complete information can be obtained. The results of a reconnaissance level survey can best be used to determine where to focus later intensive level survey efforts. The follow-up intensive level survey will provide the evaluation results that are the purpose of survey work and that will facilitate long-term planning for the preservation of the historically significant resources.

At times other types of surveys are conducted

to meet specific needs or circumstances. These include surveys updating previous surveys, thematic surveys, and surveys for environmental review. Because they require, by their nature, additional or different information, they are further discussed below and in Chapters 8, 9, and 10, respectively.

A survey typically encompasses all or defined portions of a political unit such as a village, city, or county. Surveys done to satisfy environmental review requirements for federally assisted projects under Section 106 of the National Historic

Preservation Act generally involve smaller areas whose limits are based on the boundaries of the federally assisted projects. Surveys can also be thematic- rather than geography-based — that is, encompassing properties linked by common historic themes, such as lumbering or iron-mining, or by building or structure type, architectural style, or other characteristics. Thematic surveys that have been carried out in Michigan include ones for highway bridges, post offices, and state parks.

WHY SURVEY?

The reasons for initiating an above-ground survey project are varied, but commonly include one or more of the following:

- To provide a basis for local planning.
- To provide data to support local district, National Register of Historic Places district, or individual property designations.
- To comply with environmental review requirements for a project under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
- To achieve and maintain Certified Local Government (CLG) status.
- To develop heritage tourism initiatives.
- To provide information for thematic studies.
- To provide a permanent record for the future.



Demolition for Capitol Commons Project, Lansing

Local Planning

In this age of rapid and fundamental change, Michigan's citizens are increasingly concerned about the quality of life in the places where they live and work. Change seems inevitable and often uncontrollable. The qualities and features of our communities, which we value and which give them their character and make them enjoyable places in which to reside and work, are eroded or relentlessly threatened.

Historic preservation is one tool that can be used to begin to influence the character and scope of change and mold it in a direction the community views as positive. The incorporation of preservation into local long-term planning requires information about the community's historic resources and their

significance. A survey of above-ground resources is a means of gathering this data and putting it into a useful format for planning purposes. It allows the community to take stock of its historic assets as part of the long-term goal of preserving and using them to enhance the community's quality of life. Having the data helps communities plan ahead and avoid "eleventh hour" controversies regarding the preservation of historically significant properties.

Historic District Nominations and Study Committee Reports

The preparation of nominations for listing historic districts in the National Register of Historic Places requires site-specific information on all properties within the proposed district boundaries. Surveys carried out in connection with the proposed designation of historic districts under the Michigan local historic districts enabling act, Public

Act 169 of 1970, as amended, must also provide site-specific information on all properties in proposed districts. The documentation gathered in the initial survey process will be useful in the administration of federal, state, and local programs if the district is listed in the national register, and it will provide critical documentation for the local historic district commission as it works to maintain the integrity of a historic district. The survey information may also be used to encourage and facilitate use of the Federal Historic Preservation Investment Tax Credit, and the Michigan Historic Preservation Tax Credit available to owners of certain historically designated properties.

Environmental Review

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires that federal agencies (or local or state agencies to whom the federal agencies delegate the responsibility) document whether or not proposed actions that rely on federal funding, licensing, or permitting will affect historically significant properties. The agencies must also assess the nature of any potential impacts on historic resources. Undertakings that typically require environmental review include housing rehabilitations and demolitions using Department of Housing and Urban Development funds; highway projects funded by the Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation; relicensing of hydro-electric plants by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission; and communications tower installations licensed by the Federal Communications Commission. Federal funding agencies or those to whom the authority has been delegated will often need to conduct survey work in order to make these determinations. Documentation summarizing and analyzing the survey data, evaluation work, and the potential impact of a proposed project must be submitted to the SHPO for review. Survey work can delay projects when, as is often the case, it has to be performed at the last minute. Planning for federally funded, licensed, and permitted projects could in many cases proceed more quickly if the locations of historically significant properties were known in advance.

Certified Local Government Status

The Certified Local Government (CLG) program was established in 1980 by the federal government to promote preservation activity among local units of government. Incentives for becoming a CLG include eligibility for partial funding for carrying out an on-going survey program. CLGs may participate in a grant program to fund on-going surveys or to intensively survey specific areas. Information about Michigan's CLG program can be obtained from the SHPO.

Heritage Tourism Initiatives

Because of its positive economic impacts, heritage tourism is being widely promoted at the local, regional, and state level. Surveys are undertaken to identify historic properties and provide the information base about them for promotional and interpretive materials.

Thematic Studies

Thematic surveys are undertaken to determine the location and significance of properties associated with historic themes, such as lumbering or agriculture, or specific property categories, such as railroad and highway bridges, post offices, or Civil War memorials. Information comparable to that collected in intensive surveys is required in thematic surveys. Often, a thematic survey will result in the preparation of a national register nomination for all eligible properties within the theme or property type.

Permanent Record

While identifying and protecting historic resources are fundamental purposes of all survey projects, survey also provides an opportunity to create a permanent record of a community's or area's built environment at a particular time. Every above-ground survey project should be designed to provide high-quality information and photo images that will be useful in the future to historians and others seeking information about properties which no longer exist or have been altered.

THE SHPO AND THE STATEWIDE INVENTORY

The Michigan SHPO is part of the Michigan Historical Center. The SHPO has been working with the state's communities, regional planning agencies, and citizens to study and preserve the state's diverse heritage of above-ground resources since the office was founded in the late 1960s. Prior to that the state of Michigan recognized the importance of preserving history through the acquisitions of Fort Mackinac (and the establishment of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission to manage it) in 1895, the Fort Michilimackinac site in 1904, and Fort Wilkins in 1923, and through the Centennial Farm Program, established by the Michigan Historical Commission in 1948, and the Michigan State Register of Historic Sites and Michigan Historical Marker programs, created by Public Act 10 of 1955. The Centennial Farm and the state register/historical marker programs are today administered by the SHPO.

Michigan's SHPO was established following the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The act was a response to public concern over the increasing pace of demolition of the nation's historic landmarks and architecture, much of it at the hands of the federally funded Interstate Highway and Urban Renewal programs. The National Historic Preservation Act established the basic national framework for historic preservation, including the National Register of Historic Places, an expansion of the older National Historic Landmark program to include properties of historic significance at the local and state level as well as the nationally significant ones recognized by the landmark program. Under the act, the federal government provides matching grants to the states to fund state historic preservation offices that are charged with developing and managing rational and systematic programs of preservation planning in their states. Each state's program must include the tasks of identifying significant above- and below-ground historic resources, evaluating properties' eligibility for the national register and nominating eligible ones, reviewing the effects of federally licensed or assisted projects on cultural resources, and providing the state's planners and the public with data that fosters the preservation of significant historic resources.

Data from survey activities conducted over more than three decades with support from or in cooperation with the SHPO have resulted in the creation of a statewide inventory housed at the SHPO. The statewide inventory contains information, photographs, and maps for over three hundred thousand properties from all parts of Michigan. It is the state's largest repository of data on above-ground historic resources. For the vast majority of the surveyed properties, the data includes an inventory card for each surveyed property containing basic information and a black-and-white photographic print. The cards are filed by county, community, and street (census tract and block for a few of the older surveys). Locations of surveyed properties are plotted on survey maps. Survey reports provide background information on the survey areas in many cases. For most of the surveyed properties 35 mm black-and-white negatives are also available. In addition, for properties surveyed at the intensive level over the past ten years, inventory forms containing additional descriptive and historical information may exist. These intensive level inventory forms are bound into the survey reports for the areas in which they are located.

Most new inventory data over the past few years has been collected in electronic format, using the SHPO-developed Ruskin survey database program. The data will eventually be converted to ARGUS, the database program used throughout the Michigan Historical Center (the Center's ARGUS database includes records of museum artifacts, archival holdings, archaeological sites, and historic resources). Thus newer above-ground survey data in the statewide inventory currently consists of electronic property records, each with an electronic image. For more information about use of the Ruskin program, see Appendix A, the Ruskin Manual.

The statewide inventory is useful on several levels:

- Comparisons with other similar properties help define the context for evaluating any newly surveyed properties;
- The data, although not indexed at present, can serve as a resource for research in the architecture of a community or county; and

- The data can be used as a source of illustrations for publications dealing with an area's history or architecture.

Survey data in the statewide inventory reflects each property's condition at the time it was surveyed. Much of the survey data and photography is out of date, having been created a decade or more ago. That very obsolescence, however, actually makes them valuable as a unique record of what our communities — their business districts and older neighborhoods — and rural building stock looked like in the days before so much was retrofitted for energy conservation and hidden beneath synthetic

sidings. Planning for the preservation of our historic communities, neighborhoods, and rural areas should take a long term approach, and knowledge of the original character of the resources should be a useful tool in performing realistic evaluations of what original material may survive beneath modern alterations or be feasibly restored. The older data in the statewide inventory will become more and more valuable with the passage of time, enabling historians, planners, and others charged with decision-making that can affect historic resources to recognize the historic character and significance that may now be less visible.